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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000230

SENSITIVE  
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [OIC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BRUNEI RECEPTIVE TO SPECIAL ENVOY CUMBER'S MESSAGE

BANDAR SER 00000230 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Presidential Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Sada Cumber was warmly received during his recent visit to Brunei. S/E Cumber steady message emphasized the U.S. commitment to increased participation in OIC, combating Islamic extremism, intrafaith dialogue, recognition of Kosovo's independence, and the increasing the role of women in Islamic societies. While only a one day trip, meetings were held with a wide spectrum of interlocutors ranging from Prince Mohamed, Brunei's Foreign Minister, Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA) officials, and the local media. Media coverage focused primarily on recognition of Kosovo's independence and Brunei's role as a progressive Muslim state. End Summary.

RECOGNIZE KOSOVO  
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¶2. (SBU) S/E Cumber emphasized that Brunei and all OIC member states should recognize Kosovo's independence as soon as possible. In his meetings with the Prince Mohamed, Brunei's Foreign Minister, as well as with Princess Masna, Ambassador at Large in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, S/E Cumber noted that Kosovo represents a tolerant Muslim nation. Using recent photos from Kosovo, in addition to prepared talking points, he outlined that Kosovo is at a crucial stage where those who promote a less tolerant Islam are trying to make headway into Kosovar society. Recognition from Brunei and other OIC nations would allow Kosovo to negate these more extremist elements.

¶3. (SBU) In meetings with the State Mufti, Minister of Religious Affairs, and Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University (UNISSA), all agreed with S/E Cumber that a tolerant Islam, as practiced in Kosovo, is a belief system that Brunei can accept. University officials also noted that they have four Kosovar master degree students currently studying on full scholarships. Local media coverage highlighted Kosovo statehood recognition as a primary topic of Cumber's visit.

ISLAMIC INTRAFaITH DIALOGUE  
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¶4. (SBU) An intrafaith dialogue is needed, according to S/E Cumber. He noted that until Islam is tolerant of difference within the faith, it will be difficult to see significant progress. Brunei's State Mufti, Pehin Dr. Ustaz Aziz, and as well as the Minister for Religious Affairs, Pehin Mohamad Zain, was receptive to this message. Both noted repeatedly that Brunei believes in a tolerant, but pious Islam. In addition, both were quick to point out that Brunei does not believe in interference in religious practices of non-muslims. (NOTE: This sentiment may not be fully realized at

lower levels of some ministries, but generally senior officials have been consistent in both message and practice. END NOTE)

#### WOMEN IN ISLAM AND BRUNEI

15. (SBU) The role of women, both within Islam, and within Brunei society was discussed throughout S/E Cumber's meetings. Princess Masna noted that Brunei is proud the role of women throughout government ministries and within the business sector. However, more opportunities are needed. S/E Cumber noted that women play a key role within Islam and that he was pleased to see Brunei's forward leaning attitude toward women's full involvement in both civil and Islamic society.

#### EDUCATION COMBATTING EXTREMISM

16. (SBU) Using education to combat extremism was highlighted throughout each meeting. Officials from UNISSA were eager to demonstrate a growing curriculum and student base with teaching based on tolerance and enlightenment. (NOTE: Embassy will use S/E Cumber's visit as a means to further engage with UNISSA to develop a better understanding of the entire curriculum, much of which is in Arabic. End Note). S/E Cumber stated education is the critical link both to enhance intrafaith dialogue and the role of women in Islam and Brunei. Education that demonstrates an "intellectual Islam" also will serve to combat Islamic extremism.

#### COMMENT

17. (SBU) Post is grateful for S/E Cumber's visit. With a new embassy team recently arrived and emphasizing the same policy areas,

BANDAR SER 00000230 002.2 OF 002

the timing was fortuitous. The meetings were cordial and Brunei officials (public and private) were receptive and quick to emphasize the tolerant role they believe Islam plays in Brunei society. Government officials were pleased to hear that the U.S. will seek a more active and collaborative role in OIC. The key, as is often the case in Brunei, is if action will follow a warm reception and good intentions. Post plans to use S/E Cumber's visit to follow up on these key policy areas.

S/E Sada Cumber did not have the opportunity to clear on the cable.

TODD